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ACCENT IN LATIN

I should be glad to be permitted to express my gratitude to Professor F. F. Abbott for his service in drawing attention to the unsatisfactory state of the Latin accent problem at the present time and offering a fresh solution of the same, and while doing so to dissociate myself once more from "the German-English school" (as he calls it) which denies the existence of a pitch-accent in classical Latin. This rejection of ancient testimony simply because it does not square with modern deductions is so common a vice in the scholarship of today that it deserves a sharper censure than Mr. Abbott has awarded. Two other examples of it may be cited here—the discrediting of the statement of Martianus Capella about Appius Claudius and the pronunciation of *z* (see *Classical Review*, 1901, pp. 218 ff.), and the invention of a new name for the battle of *Pharsalia* (*ibid.*, 1905, pp. 257 ff.). The vanity of the supposition that we, Americans, Englishmen, or Germans, know better how Latin was pronounced than Cicero and Varro, witnesses of intellectual competence at least equal to our own, is only matched by its fatuity. For if first-hand evidence of this order is not to be believed, the whole edifice of philological researches tumbles to the ground. For years I have taught that the clear and direct witness of Roman writers, to the effect that on what they regarded as the accented syllables of words there was a distinct rise of pitch, was implicitly to be accepted, and this irrespective of any difficulties which we might find in explaining other phenomena in the Latin language. I have never disguised from myself the number and importance of the facts in the pathology of unaccented vowels and syllables which, from the modern point of view, seemed to conflict with this witness. But I have been content to suspend judgment till a reconciliation could be found. I do not wish to dwell on any part of the evidence which Mr. Abbott has adduced to substantiate the pitch-accent. But there is one passage which he does not cite, of such singular evidential value that I venture again to refer to it.¹ It is in Vitruvius, *Arch.* v. 4, and it establishes at once two things that have been denied by the "German-English School"—a Latin circumflex and a musical Latin accent.

Vox enim mutationibus cum flectitur, alias fit acuta, alias gravis duobusque modis mouetur e quibus unus effectus habet continuatos. alter distantes. continuata uox neque in finitionibus consistit neque in ullo loco efficitque terminationes non apparentes, interualla autem media apparentia uti *sermone* cum dicamus "sol," "lux," "flos," "uox." nunc enim nec unde incipit nec ubi desinit intellegitur nec quae ex *acuta* facta est *gravis*, ex *gravi acuta*, apparet auribus. per distantiam autem e contrario. namque cum flectitur in mutatione uox, statuit se in alicuius sonitus finitionem, deinde in alterius et id ultro citro crebre faciendo inconstans apparet sensibus, uti in *cantionibus*, cum flectentes uocem uarietatem facimus modulationis.

¹ Compare *Classical Review*, 1899, p. 71, *a*, note, and *ibid.*, 1905, p. 364, *a*, note.

This passage is, so far as the theory goes, undoubtedly based upon a Greek treatise, the *Harmonics* of Aristoxenus: but that will not impair its witness upon facts, except to those who believe that Greek writings upon music made their readers deaf to Roman sounds. And it shows that in Roman conversation, or if you like, colloquial Latin (*sermone*), there was in monosyllables with a long vowel a gradual rise and fall of pitch, or double slide, like the Greek circumflex¹ in its character but unlike it in the circumstance that it was placed on all accented monosyllables containing a long vowel.

Upon Mr. Abbott's proposed solution of the perplexing problem it is difficult to pass judgment until it is further defined. We want to know what exactly is covered by the words which I have put in italics in the quotation of his statement: "In the late republic and the early empire the literary accent was *mainly* one of pitch and the *vulgar* accent *essentially* a matter of stress."² First as regards the term "vulgar." Is this distinguished from "colloquial" as clearly as it should be? The distinction is important. In England (I cannot speak of America) our domestic servants speak colloquial English with their masters and mistresses, but with one another they talk what we may call colloquial "vulgar" English.³ Is it meant that Cicero, e. g., used the pitch-accent or that he used the stress-accent in conversation? Or did he sometimes use the one and sometimes the other? Then as to "mainly" and "essentially." Do these words mean that on some syllables there was a pitch-accent, and on other syllables there was a stress-accent, or that some speakers used a pitch-accent and others a stress-accent, or that the same speaker sometimes used one and sometimes the other? On one point I am entirely with Mr. Abbott, viz., that the educated pronunciation of Latin, at least so far as quantity was concerned, was powerfully influenced by Greek.

The ultimate resolution of our perplexities is, I fear, a long way off; but I think it will be helpful to suggest the lines upon which we should proceed and the factors of which it is imperative for us to take account. Firstly, the analogy from Greek must be utterly discarded. Greek (this is how it is argued) had a pitch-accent and does not show syncope: Latin does show syncope and therefore had no pitch-accent. Could anything be more futile? Secondly, we must remember that the existence of syncopated doublets of words *proves nothing whatever* as to the character of the "*main*" accent, as I will ask to be allowed to call it. When a word is compressed in rapid speaking, e. g., when *solidum* becomes *soldum*,⁴ a

¹The same facts are given in a rule of later writers by Mr. Abbott, p. 446, who very fitly says that "it cannot have been borrowed from Greek writers on accent."

²P. 455.

³The differences are sufficiently marked, but it is not worth while to detail them.

⁴I take this example as one which it will take the ingenuity of Professor Exon (*Hermathena*, No. 32, pp. 117 ff.) to get round.

"main" accent will *protect the syllable on which it falls as effectively if it be pitch as if it be stress*.¹ These doublets do, however, tell us something about the syllables that lie *outside the "main" accent*. Their absence from Greek shows that the stress throughout these syllables was, roughly speaking, *level*: their presence in Latin shows that the stress over the corresponding syllables was *not level*. When a word in Greek was thus compressed, all such syllables suffered equally, the result was the original word on a smaller scale, and no doublet could arise. In Latin, however, they suffered unequally, the syllable of weakest force went to the wall and a doublet, that is a word differing sensibly from the original word, sprang into being. Hence when we see *solidum* syncopated to *soldum*, we can infer that the syllable *li* was pronounced with less force or stress than the syllable *dum*. Lastly, and this is the cardinal point, in any theories that we put forward we must recognize that pitch and stress are two independent things, and, to put it in a nutshell, a word may have its "main" pitch-accent on one syllable and its "main" stress-accent on another. Like the worthy Mrs. Bouncer in the well-known comedy, our philologists have used their utmost ingenuity to prevent the pitch-accent and the stress-accent from appearing on the stage at once. Cox and Box—Pitch and Stress—must never meet. But till they *do* meet, there can be no *ἀναγνώρισις*, nor any discovery of their real relations.

Far from me be the rashness of formulating a definite scheme of Latin accentuation; but I am prepared to incur the minor hazard of provisional prophecy. I will therefore forecast that when, if ever, the facts which bear upon this question are duly ascertained and co-ordinated, the outcome will be something like the following: The separate syllables of independent words in Latin had uniformity neither of pitch nor of stress. The syllable which received the greatest force might be the one which had the highest pitch or it might not. From the variation arose, especially in the earlier period, fluctuations and anomalies of quantity, as, for example, syllables which were neither short nor long in the strict sense and syllables with different quantity in different forms of the same word. Under Greek influences these variations were reduced until there was an approximation to a condition of nearly uniform stress. The preponderant stress (the "main" stress-accent) in the case of polysyllables tended in the times of which we know anything to move toward the end of the word, though it never passed beyond the second mora from the end, and thus to coincide with the main pitch-accent. It was not till after this movement was completed that the joint-accent lost its musical character and survived as a stress-accent alone.

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¹ This was pointed out in the *Classical Review*, 1899, p. 71 *b*